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FOR WHA/CCA

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SUBJECT: ITALY AND CUBA: NSC-DIRECTED REVIEW FOR LIBERTAD
TITLE III SUSPENSION

REF: STATE 191752

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor David D. Pearce for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. There have been few developments in Italy's relationship with Cuba in the past six months. The Italian Embassy in Havana continued to meet regularly with opposition leaders as part of efforts to engage in intensified dialogue with civil society. Italy did not participate in exchange programs with Cuba. Italian joint ventures in Cuba continued to experience judicial problems with the GOC, leading to a further decline in Italian investment on the island. The number of Italian tourists traveling to Cuba also fell. The Italian Chamber of Deputies Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Human Rights held a hearing on the human rights situation in Cuba attended by expatriate dissidents. Embassy Rome recommends the continuation of Italy's waiver under Title III as important to helping Italy maintain positions critical of the GOC. End Summary.

12. (U) Poloff and Econoff met with Paolo Miraglia, MFA Office Director for Central America and the Caribbean, December 13 to discuss Italian policy towards Cuba and any recent developments as per ref tel request.

13. (C) Italian joint ventures in Cuba continued to experience judicial problems with the GOC, leading to a further decline in Italian investment on the island. The overall level of trade with Cuba stayed roughly the same and Italy participated in the November trade fair in Havana. According to Miraglia, there were no new trade agreements with Cuba in the past six months. The number of Italian tourists traveling to Cuba fell. Miraglia reported the UK is now the number two country of origin for travel to Cuba among EU countries, with Italy dropping to third place. Italy did not participate in exchange programs with Cuba.

4.(C) Miraglia said there had been very little activity in Italy's relations with Cuba in the past six months, and no diplomatic visits, high-level or otherwise. In December, the Italian Chamber of Deputies Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Human Rights held a hearing on the human rights situation in Cuba attended by two Cuban dissidents. Osvaldo Valdes, former political prisoner now a refugee in Sweden, and Joel Brito, former president of Cuba's Liberal Democratic Party, now living in the United States, briefed the parliamentarians and met with MFA Under Secretary for Latin America Donato Di Santo. The Italian Embassy in Havana continued to meet regularly with opposition leaders as part of efforts to engage in intensified dialogue with civil society.

¶5. (C) In this transition period, Miraglia noted that the succession seemed to be consolidating and that Italy supported engaging in dialogue with the emerging leaders. He suggested that flexibility on the part of the United States could help facilitate political change on the island. Although Italy agreed in the need for strengthened U.S.-EU collaboration on Cuba, Miraglia thought a common declaration would be difficult for the GOI to accept for domestic reasons. The Italian public would see the GOI as identifying with U.S. policy and, therefore, the embargo.

¶6. (C) Comment. Embassy Rome recommends the continuation of Italy's waiver under Title III as important to helping Italy maintain positions critical of the GOC. End Comment.
SPOGLI